

disallowed, and partially allowed. Preferably, the manager reviews all billing exception responses before they are released to the railcar owner, as described below.

5 In step 910 of the method illustrated in FIG. 9, the repair agent submits the exception response by clicking either the "SUBMIT" button 1208 or the "SUBMIT/NEXT" button 1210 on the billing exception response screen display 1200. The "SUBMIT/NEXT" button 1210 also causes the graphical user interface to display a billing exception response screen for the next billing exception to be reviewed. After the repair agent clicks on either of these two
10 buttons, the billing verification system 100, 200 generates a billing exception response record in the database 108 (step 912 of the method illustrated in FIG. 9). It will be understood in the art that the billing exception response record may be an independent database record or it may be contained within the corresponding billing exception record.

15 The next step 914 is to determine whether the repair agent has reviewed all billing exception records. If not, the method returns to step 904, in which the repair agent reviews the next billing exception record in the same manner as described above. Once the repair agent has reviewed all of the
20 billing exception records for a particular railcar owner and time period, the repair agent completes the exception review process in step 916 by clicking the "COMPLETED" button on the exception header review screen display 1100 of FIG. 11. The railcar owner is then notified of the billing exception responses in step 918. At this time, the billing exception response records become available for review by the railcar owner. The railcar owner accesses
25 the billing exception response records via the "RAILROAD COMPLETED" hypertext link 504 on the railcar owner menu screen display 500 shown in FIG. 5.

30 Preferably, before the railcar owner is notified that the billing exception response records are available for review, the repair agent designates a control number, or credit billing authority number, to be associated with the bill and its corresponding billing exceptions. For instance, the repair agent may designate a control number in the control number field 1104 of the billing

exception header screen 1100 shown in **FIG. 11**. The repair agent may update the control number by clicking the "UPDATE CBA" button 1110. The railcar owner then uses this control number to take a credit on its repair charge account with the repair agent or to counter-bill the repair agent in accordance with the credit billing authority procedures provided by the AAR Interchange Rules. For example, the billing verification system 100, 200 may generate a message that is sent to the railcar owner's accounts payable system 114 indicating that the appropriate credit may be deducted from the next bill paid to that repair agent.

If necessary, the methods described above may include a number of review iterations by both the customer (i.e. railcar owner) and the vendor (i.e. repair agent). For instance, if a vendor disapproves a customer's billing exception, the customer may reply with further documentation supporting the exception. The vendor may then provide an additional response. This iterative process may continue until all disputed charges are resolved.

The invention has been described in detail with particular reference to preferred embodiments thereof and illustrative examples, but it will be understood that variations and modifications can be effected within the spirit and scope of the invention.

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